

BASIC CONSERVATION SYSTEMS UNDER THE FOOD SECURITY ACT

A Basic Conservation System (BCS) is a practice or combination of practices that, as a minimum, provides for the reduction and/or maintenance of soil loss on Highly Erodible Land (HEL). A BCS will ensure that long term productivity of the soil resource base is sustained, and meets acceptable limits as defined in the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG).

The objective in the planning and application of BCS is to meet the minimum requirements of the 1985 Food Security Act (FSA), as amended. A basic conservation system that meets the requirements of the FSA may differ from a Resource Management System (RMS) in that it only deals with the erosion control component of a RMS.

During the development of a BCS through the conservation planning process, the decisionmaker should be provided with sound alternatives and opportunities that meets with his/her objectives and also provides compliance with the FSA.

BASIC CONSERVATION SYSTEM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The minimum level of essential treatment for a BCS is that, which when applied, results in soil loss at or below acceptable levels. In developing a BCS, all forms of erosion must be controlled to the established acceptable levels. Planning consideration must be given to sheet, rill, wind, ephemeral, and gully erosion.

ADDITIONAL TREATMENT

By definition, a BCS deals only with the erosion control component of a Resource Management System. For additional treatment needs, refer to guidelines for the development of Resource Management Systems in Section III.

ALTERNATIVE CONSERVATION SYSTEMS UNDER THE FOOD SECURITY ACT

An Alternative Conservation System (ACS) is a practice or combination of practices that, if applied, will come as close as possible to meeting the standards of a Basic Conservation System and is economically and practically feasible.

The objective in the planning and application of ACS is to maintain the eligibility of the land-user to meet the requirements of the 1985 Food Security Act, as amended. An ACS that meets the requirements of the FSA will differ from a RMS and a BCS in that it will not achieve a degree of soil loss reduction that would ensure the long-term productivity of the resource base.

A land user may request that a field or fields be redefined in order to reduce the number of acres that will require treatment as Highly Erodible Land to meet the provisions of the FSA. As a part of the conservation planning process, NRCS can provide assistance in redefining fields. The land-user is responsible to work out the final redefinition with USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA).

During the process of selecting an ACS from the prepared alternatives (FSALT), the land user will be provided with sound alternatives that include those practices which, if applied would upgrade an ACS to a BCS. The ACS selected by the land user should be that practice or combination of practices that, if applied, would achieve the greatest degree of erosion control that is both economically justifiable and practical to apply. If an alternative is selected that does not meet the criteria, the NRCS - CPA-6 must be documented thoroughly as to why an economically justifiable alternative still remained, but was not selected.

ESSENTIAL TREATMENT

The level of essential treatment for an ACS is that which, when applied, will achieve the greatest degree of erosion control that is both economically justifiable and practical to apply. In developing ACS, sheet, rill, and ephemeral erosion conditions have been considered. ACS common for each field office are included in Section III of the Field Office Technical Guide. Other systems or modifications may be proposed for technical review by the Resource Planning Staff Leader and approved on a case by case basis.

ADDITIONAL TREATMENT

By definition, an Alternative Conservation System deals only with reducing existing erosion to levels that are both economically feasible and practical to apply in order to comply with the Food Security Act. For additional treatment, refer to the standards for development of Resource Management Systems or Basic Conservation Systems.